

THE SHRINE OF WISDOM

VOL. VI. No. 23.

SPRING EQUINOX, 1925

THE CHALDEAN ORACLES

*Translated and Systematized with Comments by the Editors
of "The Shrine of Wisdom."*

FOREWORD

MODERN scholarship has established the fact that the fragments known as "The Chaldean Oracles" embody the remains, which have come down to us in Greek, of a lost mystery poem, composed in hexameter verse in the usual style of oracular utterances.

The authenticity of these fragments is vouched for by numerous authorities, such as the Great Neoplatonists: Porphyry, Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus, Synesius, Damascius, Simplicius, Olympiodorus, Pletho, Psellus, Franciscus Patricius, Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino, and Thomas Taylor. The majority of these philosophers have quoted the Oracles in their writings.

As Thomas Taylor observes: "They are not only venerable for their antiquity, but inestimably valuable for the unequalled sublimity of the doctrines they contain"—an opinion which was shared by the early Christian Fathers and the later Platonists.

The doctrines they contain have been attributed to Zoroaster, though which particular Zoroaster is not known. However, the precise details of their origin are not of primary importance, for in this they are like many of the most precious sacred scriptures known to the world.

It is possible that they were called "Oracles" because they were handed on orally by word of mouth from generation to generation, like the early Druidic and other mysteries, and were not originally intended to be written down. This would explain the reason for the nature and date of their origin being lost in the remote past.

In the new translation, which is here given, the known fragments have been collected and arranged in accordance with a Cosmological System upon which it is evident, from a comparison of the Orphic and Neoplatonic Teachings, the Chaldean Mystery Poem was originally based. The more this System is studied, the more profound does its significance become, for, as Thomas Taylor affirms, it reveals the source of some of Plato's most sublime conceptions, and, as a whole, is perfectly conformable with the Master Philosopher's most abstruse Teachings.

THE PRIMAL TRIAD—FATHER, POWER, MIND.

In the Chaldean Wisdom the Absolute and Infinite ONE is contemplated with profound silence as being wholly beyond all human appellations or predicates. There seems to be no attempt, in the Oracles themselves, to name That Great ONE Who is absolutely Ineffable; but so lofty are the conceptions concerning the First Triad, that this silence regarding the Supreme is more eloquent than any finite words could possibly be to produce that profound reverential awe in which Deity should be approached.

The First Great Chaldean Triad is called:

FATHER,
POWER,
MIND, or INTELLECT.

Psellus, in his Exposition of the Oracles of the Chaldeans, says: "There is One Principle of all things, and this they celebrate as the ONE and the GOOD. After this, they venerate a certain Paternal Profundity, consisting of Three Triads, but each Triad contains Father, Power, and Intellect."

The ONE and the GOOD are the Titles used by Plato to denote the Absolute, but they do not actually appear in any of the Oracles.

The FATHER is the Primary Intelligible One, the First Conceivable One, the Original Revealer, the Ultimate Principle of all that can ever be known, the End as well as the Beginning of all that is or ever can be knowable or intelligible.

POWER is the Principle according to which the Father manifests Himself—by which the ONE becomes TWO.

MIND, INTELLECT, or NOUS*, is Divine Prescience, or Fore-knowledge: It is That Which Knows with Divine Transcendence, and, by knowing, is the Cause that produces and provides for all that is made manifest or ever will be made manifest.

The Father is only to be known by and through Divine Intellect or Nous. When the intellect of man is empty or void of all conceptions that tend to separate him from God, then it becomes identified with the Divine Nous, and through this, ultimately, may arise to oneness with the Father, the Intelligible of all intelligibles.

I. "Not by vehemence mayst thou gain intellection of that Intelligible. All things, with the extended flame of the extended Intellect, mayst thou measure, save that Intelligible. Yet of This the intellection must thou gain. For if thou turnest thy Intellect in upon itself, without striving, that too shalt thou know; bringing a pure intent vision, thou shouldst extend the void intellect of thy Soul to the Intelligible, that thou mayst learn That Intelligible, since It subsisteth beyond Intellect."

This is the highest stage of contemplation, when the human consciousness is lost or merged in the Divine, by rising above the Intellect that knows and becoming united with that which is the End as well as the Origin of all Knowledge.

II. "Every Intellect (Nous) knoweth Deity intellectually, for Intellect is not without the Intelligible, and the Intelligible subsisteth not apart from Intellect."

The Paternal Profundity is a Tri-unity, a Three-in-oneness, embracing (1) The Father, or the Intelligible One, (2) Power, and (3) Intellect, or Mind, or Nous; therefore, Pure Intellect, in its highest subsistence, is one with the

* It should be noted that the words "Mind" and "Intellect," as equivalents of "Nous," are used in their original Greek sense and not the modern connotation. Thus, "Intellect" has a similar meaning to that conveyed by the present day use of "Spirit," and the word "Intellectual" has the modern sense of "Spiritual."

Intelligible. The Knower and the Knowable do not subsist apart in the Deep of God.

III. "Power is with Them (Father and Intellect), but Intellect from Him."

POWER, as the Second Principle of the Chaldean Trinity, subsists between the FATHER and INTELLECT; therefore, It is united mystically with both. The Father is the unmanifested One, Who becomes manifested through Power, by means of Intellect; in this sense, Intellect is said to be "from Him," and yet, paradoxically, It is one with Him, even as the manifested in reality is one with the unmanifested.

IV. "There first is the Monad, where is the Paternal Monad."

A Monad is a subjective wholeness, which is one and yet comprehends and produces all numbers. The Father is the Paternal Monad, who is the Divine Unity or One from Whom all numbers proceed in an orderly but never-ending procession.

V. "The Monad is extended and begetteth the Two."

Thus, from the ONE comes the Two, from the Two comes the Three, and from the Three come all numbers and divine principles.

VI. "The Mind (Intellect) of the Father pronounced that all things should be threefold: His Will assented, and immediately all things were so divided."

The Duad plus the Monad equals the Triad, thus, simultaneously with the emanation of the Duad, the Triad is produced, and all things receive a threefold impress or differentiation.

VII. "For the Duad resideth with Him and gleameth with intellectual differentiations (having the power) to govern all things, and to give order to that which is in chaos."

The Duad—Power and Intellect—not only proceed from the Father, but also abide causally in Him, as the transcendent principles of all order.

VIII. “The Mind (Intellect) of the Eternal Father spake and the Three came forth, governing all things by Intellect.”

The Father gives being or essence to all things, which enables them to exist; Power gives life or energy, which enables them to move and act; while Intellect guides them so that they move, or are moved with intelligence.

IX. “The Father immediately withdrew Himself, but held not back His Own Fire within His Intellectual Power.”

The Father does not Himself proceed, but transcendently abides, both in Himself and yet in all things, by means of His Fire, which is the Divine Immanent Spark in all things. But, in a mystical sense, His Intellectual Power also abides, for It is rooted in the Paternal Profundity.

X. “Such is That Intellect beyond, energizing before energy, for It came not forth, but abode in the Paternal Profundity, and in the innermost shrine with the God-nourishing Silence.”

There are three aspects of each of the Principles of the Triad. From one point of view these may be regarded as the Abiding, Proceeding, and Returning.

Hence, there is an Abiding Intellect, as well as a Proceeding and a Returning Intellect.

In the superessential adytum of the Infinite all things abide in immutable Silence.

XI. “For the Father mingled every spirit from this Triad.”

Nothing can exist or subsist on any plane or in any realm without the three principles represented by the Primal Triad.

XII. "For all things by these Three are governed. In Them all things subsist."

XIII. "For you may conceive that all things are subject to these Three Principles."

XIV. "(The Triad) measuring and bounding all things."

The First Principle of the Triad is the Beginning of all; the Second is the Middle; and the Third is the End, by which they are again connected to the Beginning. By the Father they abide; by Power they proceed; and by Intellect they return.

XV. "In every world shineth a Triad of which a Monad is the principle."

In every realm of existence and activity, the principles of the Primal Triad are repeated, and each subsequent Triad, in the Cosmological Scheme, is suspended, as it were, from a Monad in the realm above it; just as the First Triad may be said to be rooted in the Infinite ONE.

XVI. "For nothing imperfect revolveth from the Paternal Principle."

The Father is the Perfect ONE, and all His Works bear the Seal of His Perfection, for imperfection cannot spring from a Perfect Source.

XVII. "From the vortices of this Triad all things are perpetually filled."

The Paternal Profundity is the Unfathomable Deep of the Plenum, by the Power of Which all things are for ever filled to the measure of their receptivity.

XVIII. "For the Intellect of the Father, Self-begotten, comprehending His Works, sowed in all things the fire-

laden bond of love, that all things might remain ever loving on, throughout the aeons of endless time, that the diacosm of life might remain intellectually in the full light of the Father, that the first principles of the Cosmos might continue perpetually active in love."

The Father, Self-begotten, is the First-born Light and the First-born Love: the Light which enlighteneth all things, the Love which provides for them, and the Object of aspiration of them all throughout all Eternity.

XIX. "Ye who know intellectually, know the Paternal Profundity which transcends the Cosmos."

Intellect or Nous is the Higher Spiritual Mind, and not the ordinary finite human mind. When this Divine Mind is active in man, then his consciousness transcends time and space, attaining to the real Knowledge of God.

XX. "That which Intellect saith, It saith intellectually."

As Thomas Taylor affirms:

"Intellect in energy, or in the act of knowing, is the same with the object of intellection. For the object of its perception must reside in its essence, or it would perceive externally like sense, and thus would not behold the thing itself, but only its image. But if that which is Intelligible is seated in the essence of Intellect, it will in no respect differ from Intellect, for it will be essential to its nature, and will consequently be intellectual as well as intelligible."

XXI. "And of that Intellect which guides the Empyrean World."

In the Chaldean System the Empyrean World is the Subjective Realm as a whole, which embraces the principles of all that is made manifest in the Objective Cosmos.

(To be continued).

SAYINGS OF MUHAMMAD

Actions will be judged according to intentions.

* * *

No man is a true believer unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself.

* * *

He dieth not who giveth life to learning.

* * *

The best of alms is that which the right hand giveth, and the left hand knoweth not of.

* * *

Humility and courtesy are acts of piety.

* * *

An hour's contemplation is better than a year's adoration.

* * *

Speak to men according to their mental capacities, for if you speak all things to all men, some cannot understand you, and so fall into errors.

* * *

He who knoweth his own self, knoweth God.

* * *

Keep yourselves far from envy; because it eateth up and taketh away good actions, like as fire eateth up and burneth wood.

* * *

O Lord, grant to me the love of Thee; grant that I love those that love Thee; grant that I may do the deeds that win Thy love; make Thy love dearer to me than self, family, or than wealth.

JEWELS

"If we whisper only, and, without opening our lips, address God in silence, we have cried out from within; and He, without ceasing, hears every inward address."—*Clement of Alexandria*.

* * *

"The knowledge that arises from goodness is something that is more certain and more divine than all demonstration, than all other learnings of the world."—*Origen*.

* * *

"God's Essence is too bright and dazzling for our sight, too pure and spiritual for our touch, too high and exalted for our perception; we can therefore only estimate Him worthily, by acknowledging that He is infinitely above our reach."—*St. Cyprian*.

* * *

"Since things do not turn out as we wish, let us wish them to turn out as they do."—*St. Basil*.

A SYNTHESIS OF THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

III.—KARMA MARGA, THE PATH OF ACTION*

KARMA, which means "Action," also embraces the law of cause and effect, because wherever there is Action, there is an effect, and wherever there is an effect, there is a cause.

The Divine Action of Brahmâ, the Creator Lord, is the Cause of the Manifested World. Everything in the universe expresses different aspects of Action or Karma. But man, because he possesses inherently a free volitional and rational nature, is able to set up independent causes and effects, thus taking on a particularized and personal Karma of his own.

All his purely personal actions are Karmic, that is, they are productive of definite effects, which, in turn, become causes in relation to further effects: thus there is an endless operation of this law with a continual and cumulative sequence of causes and effects. While he is subject to this revolving wheel of causation man is bound to the limiting conditions of Transiency. If he seeks liberation through Inaction, he soon discovers that since some part of his nature is perpetually active, he is still the cause of effects and cannot thus escape the Law of Karma.

But the ultimate nature of every effect is determined by the nature of the intention which is behind the Action; for instance, if the intention is personal and selfish, then the effect is of a like nature, but if the intention is truly impersonal and wholly selfless, then the effect or effects are not identified with the personal self, in the Karmic sense. This is the principle of Karma Mârگا, the Path of Action, whereby man, without ceasing to act, may actually gain liberation by means of Actions, when these are characterized by sacred intentions and become sacred works, or sacrifices.

* See Issues No. 21 and 22 for the previous articles of this Series on "I—Sri Krishna, the Universal Lord," and "II—Dharma Mârگا, the Path of Duty."

Sri Krishna said:

III.—In the beginning, the Creator Lord (*Prajapati*), having created mankind with sacred action (*Yajna*), spake unto them saying: "By this shall ye increase and be fruitful. This be the fulfilment of all your desires."—(*Kamaduk*)—10.

PRAJAPATI is an aspect of Brahmâ, as creator of all manifested things. He is the same as the Elohim.

YAJNA is sacred work, holy action, or sacrifice in its truest sense. Deity, in the act of creation, gives of Itself, as it were, to all Its creatures. Mankind, being made in the Image of Deity, when acting according to its purest essence, spontaneously gives of itself because of the principle of *Yajna* with which it is endowed and by which it is able not only to perpetuate itself but also fulfil its desires.

KAMADUK, as the Sacred Cow of Indra, symbolizes the fulfilment of all celestial objects of desire.

"With this bless ye the Shining Ones, and may the Shining Ones bless you; thus, nourishing each other, ye shall obtain the highest good.—11.

"For the Shining Ones, approached by sacred action (*Yajna*), shall supply your needs; whoso partakes thereof without meet offering unto Them, he verily is a thief.—12.

The righteous, who eat after sacrifice, eat that which is free of sin; but the impious, who spread a feast for themselves alone, eat that with which sin is mingled.—13.

By food all creatures live; by rain is food produced; by sacred action comes productive rain; by sacrifice is Action wrought.—14.

Know that Action (*Karma*) springs from Brahmâ, and that Brahmâ proceeds from the Indivisible One; therefore, Brahmâ, the All-pervading, is ever present in worship (*Yajna*).—15.

He who on earth follows not this cycle thus ordained, who lives in sin and gratifies the senses, he, O Son, liveth in vain.—16.

That man, who is happy in self, who is filled by self, who is contented with self, for him, verily, there is naught else.—17.

This may be interpreted as the "little" self, or the All-Self—in the one case, man lives for himself alone, but in the other he is one with the SELF of all selves.

“ He hath no part here either in that which is done or that which is not done; neither doth his purpose lie with any beings that are born.—18.

Wherefore, apply thyself to Action, which is duty, without attachment; for he who performeth work with non-attachment, that one reacheth the Supreme.—19.

For by works alone did sacred men of old attain to bliss; thus too, for the weal of all, shouldst thou to good works be pledged.—20.

Whatsoever a worthy man may achieve, that also other men may do; whatsoever example he may offer, that the multitude may follow.—21.

There is naught in the three worlds, O Son, that I need to do, nor is anything to be attained that is unattained, yet still do I abide in action here.—22.

For if I acted not, ceaseless and unwearied, O Son, men all around would follow my path.—23.

Then, would earth's order be destroyed, if I ceased to work, and confusion's cause and destructor I should be.—24.

As the unwise, with attachment, work on, O Son, so should the wise, with non-attachment, work on, for the sake of the common good.—25.

Let not the wise man unsettle the minds of the ignorant who to action are attached; but, approving good works, let the sage to right action lead.—26.

Actions are wrought by the Qualities (*Gunas*) born of Nature (*Prakriti*); but he whose mind is deluded by self-hood (*Ahamkāra*), thinketh: “ I am the doer.”—27.

But he who with truth, O Mighty-armed, distinguishes inherent Qualities from their Actions, is not attached, knowing that “ Qualities act upon each other.”—28.

Confounded by the Qualities of Nature, the unwise are bound by the effects of these Qualities; but let not the wise man, on that account, unsettle the minds of the foolish.—29.

Surrendering all works to Me, with mind intent on the Supreme Self (*Adhyâtma*), devoid of expectancy and self-hood, put away thy sorrow, O Arjuna, and arise to Action.—30.

Those who abide ever in this doctrine of Mine, full of faith and uncomplaining, are freed from the effects of Action.—31.

But those who, carping at this My Teaching, follow it not, know them to be self-deluded, devoid of knowledge, and undiscerning—therefore doomed to failure.—32.

Even the man of knowledge acts according to his nature:—all beings follow nature;—wherefore, what availeth it to contend against the law?—33.

Attachment and aversion are concerned with objects of the senses; be not by these twain enslaved—they are obstacles to thy path.”—34.

Arjuna said:

“But, by what is man impelled when prone to sin even against his nature, as though constrained by force?”—36.

Sri Krishna said:

“It is desire, it is anger, born of the energy of passion (*Rajas*); all-consuming, all-defiling, know this to be thy foe here on earth.—37.

As fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo by the womb, so is the world of things enwrapped by this (*Rajas*).—38.

Knowledge is enveloped by this, O Son, which is the constant enemy of the wise, assuming countless forms, fair but deceitful, subtle as a flame.—39.

The sense-organs, the mind, the intuition, it is said, are its seat; in its play with these, knowledge is veiled, and the dweller-in-body thus deluded.—40.

Therefore, O Prince, mastering first the senses, subdue this desire, and loose thyself from the sin that destroys knowledge and discernment.—41.

Great, it is said, are the senses, but greater than the senses is the mind; greater than the mind is intuition (*Buddhi*); greater than intuition is the SELF (*Ātmā*).—42.

Thus, knowing HIM who is greater than all insight (*Buddhi*), O Mighty-armed, and subduing self by the SELF, slay thou this changing foe so hard to reach.”—43.

IV.—“Whoso knoweth My birth and this divine work of Mine, with truth, when quitting fleshly body is not subject to its birth again:—he cometh to Me, O Arjuna.—9.

Many there be, who, freed from passion, fear, and anger, taking refuge in Me, cleansed by the sacred flame of knowledge (*Tapas*), enter into My Being.—10.

Howsoever men approach Me, even so do I exalt them, O Son, for the path men take on every side is Mine.—11.

Those who seek reward for works, pay homage to the Powers that give, for quickly in this world of mortals is Action followed by its fruits.—12.

The fourfold castes of men proceed from Me, according to Nature's Qualities (*Gunas*) and Action (*Karma*), yet, though the Author thereof, I, the Immutable, am not involved therein.—13.

The blending of the Qualities or *Gunas*, which are inherent in all material substances, by *Karma* or Action, produces the all-various types of beings, which are fourfold in a basic sense:—(1) Those in which *Sattva* predominates; (2) Those in which *Sattva* is blended with *Rajas*; (3) Those in which *Rajas* is blended with *Tamas*; and (4) Those in which *Tamas* predominates.

Actions affect not Me, neither in Me is there desire for Action's fruit; he who knows Me thus, is not bound by Works.—14.

Knowing this, the seekers of old performed works of deliverance; therefore do thou engage in Action as did the wise of ages past.—15.

"What is Action? What is Inaction?" thou dost ask, as even did the wise of old; therefore will I teach thee this, which knowing, thou mayst to deliverance pass.—16.

It is necessary to discriminate these three: right action from wrong action from inaction—mysterious is the path of Action.—17.

He who perceives Action in Inaction, and Inaction in Action, he is wise among men, he is enlightened, and fulfils the purpose of his work.—18.

This is the Paradox of the Middle Path between the two extremes:—to act and not to act, without being identified with the action or the non-action and their results; to be active in the Little Self while abiding inactive in the Great Self; to be inactive in the consciousness of the Little Self, while abiding actively in the consciousness of the Great Self.

He whose every effort is free from the impulse of desire, whose work is transformed by the fire of Wisdom (*Tapas*), he is called enlightened by the wise.—19.

Renouncing all attachment to the fruits of labour, ever serene, inwardly content, such a one, although engaged in Action, is not the Actor.—20.

For the Great Self acts in and through and by him.

Free from expectancy, with mind and self controlled, surrendering possessions, performing action for the body's care, he is not stained thereby.—21.

Content with whatsoever comes unsought, beyond the pairs of opposites, void of envy, unmoved in gain or loss, he, though acting, is not bound.—22.

Of him, who from attachment is free, who is liberated, whose mind is established in Knowledge, whose works are sacrifices, all his Karma melts away.—23.

Brahmâ is the sacrifice; Brahmâ is the oblation; Brahmâ is the sacred fire, and by Brahmâ is the offering made; thus meditating on Brahmâ, in all his works, into the Eternal One (Brahmâ), doth he enter.—24.

Some devotees there be, who offer sacrifice to the Shining Ones; others who perform sacred work in the fire of Brahmâ.—25.

Some offer hearing and other senses in the fire of restraint; some offer sound and other objects of sense as oblations in the fires of the senses.—26.

Others, too, sacrifice the functions of the sense organs and the forces of life, in the mystic fire of self-control, kindled by sacred knowledge.—27.

Others, again, offer the sacrifice of wealth, the sacrifice of austerity, and the sacrifice of devotion (*Yoga*); still others, mortified by rigid vows, sacrifice by silent reading and the offering of all Knowledge.—28.

Yet others, sacrifice by incoming and outgoing breath and its control. (*Prânâyâma*).—29.

Others, who practise abstinence, sacrifice their living-breath in Life (*Prâna*).

All these are skilled in sacred works, and by sacrifice have destroyed their sins.—30.

Those who, by sacrifice, partake of the food of immortality (*Amrita*) into the Presence of the Eternal ONE (*Brahmâ*) do enter. This world is not for him, who no sacred work doth offer; how much less, then, can he merit any other, O Best of Men?—31.

Thus, manifold are the kinds of sacred works offered in the Presence of Brahmâ. Know that all these are born of Action (*Karma*); knowing this, thou wilt be free.—32.

The sacrifice of Knowledge is better than the sacrifice of wealth, O Slayer of Foes! For all Action, in its completion, culminates in Knowledge.—33.

Learn thou this by reverence, by seeking, by humble service;—thus, the Wise, who see the Truth, will instruct thee in all wisdom.—34.

Knowing which, thou shalt not again thus fall into error, O Son, for thou wilt see all things, without distinction, in thyself and likewise all in Me.—35.

Even though thou shouldst be of all sinners the greatest, thou wouldst cross over all sin in the barque of wisdom.—36.

As burning fire reduces fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so doth wisdom's fire to ashes resolve all Action (*Karma*).—37.

There is no purifier like unto wisdom in all this world, and he who seeketh it, shall find it—being grown perfect—verily in himself.—38.

The man of steadfast faith, gains wisdom with self-mastery, and thus having attained, he speedily goeth to Supreme Peace (*Nirvâna*).—39.

The ignorant, the faithless, the doubting self, finds naught; neither this world, nor that beyond brings peace to him who is the slave of doubts.—40.

But works fetter not him who is master of himself, whose works are renounced in devotion, whose doubts are destroyed by Knowledge, O Subduer of Wealth!—41.

Wherefore, with the sword of Knowledge, slay this doubt, born of ignorance, binding thy heart; and, giving thyself to devotion, arise, O Son!"—42.

Arjuna said:

V.—"Thou praisest, O Krishna, renunciation of Action, at one time, and then service by Devotion, at another; declare to me clearly which of the twain is the better way."—I.

Sri Krishna said:

Renunciation of Action, and Devotion by Action, both lead to highest bliss; but of the twain, verily Devotion by Action is more esteemed than Renunciation of Action.—2.

He is a true renouncer, who has neither longing nor aversion, O Mighty-armed, who dwells above the pairs of opposites, freed, without effort, from every fetter.—3.

The unknowing speak of the Path of Right Knowledge (*Sankhya*) and the Path of Right Devotion (*Yoga*), as diverse, but not so the wise;—he who is rightly devoted to either obtains the fruit of both.—4.

The state gained by devotees of Right Knowledge is gained likewise by those who rightly follow Devotion's path;—he who sees these twain as one, sees with vision clear.—5.

But renunciation of works, O Mighty-armed, is hard to win without devotion;—the holy man, harmonized in devotion, speedily reacheth the Eternal ONE (*Brahmā*).—6.

He who is fixed in devotion, pure in mind, self-ruled, and master over senses, with self made one with the Self of all—he is not touched by the effects of works.—7.

“Nought of myself I do”—thus, the devotee who knows the Truth, will reflect, in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, and breathing.—8.

In speaking, holding fast or letting go, opening or closing eyes, always knowing that senses are concerned alone with objects of the sense.—9.

He who acteth, doing all things in the Eternal ONE (*Brahmā*), renouncing attachment, is as unaffected by works as a lotus-leaf by the waters.—10.

By body, by mind, by inner vision, or even by senses alone, true devotees, without attachment, perform works for their purification.—11.

Such votaries, renouncing fruit of deeds, attain to endless peace; the undevout to rewards attached through impulse of desire, are ever bound.—12.

Renouncing action by power of mind, the embodied one, with self controlled, abides serene in the nine-gated city (*the body*), neither acting, nor action causing.—13.

The Lord of the World impels none to assume the rôle of actor, neither is He the cause of Action, nor the attachment of Action with its fruits—it is the appetency of Nature that operates in these.—14.

The Lord of the World takes not the evil-doing nor yet the well-doing of any:—in this mankind are deluded, their Knowledge veiled by ignorance.—15.

But for those whose ignorance is dispelled by the precepts of Right Knowledge, the Light Supreme shines forth, resplendent as a Sun.—16.

Meditating on Him, with Him the self made one, stablished in Him, with Him as the Goal Supreme, they go whence there is no return, their sins cast off by Knowledge.—17.

To him who wisely sees, a devout and learned sage, a cow, an elephant, and even a dog or an outcaste, are seen as one in essence.—18.

The world is overcome, even here, by those whose minds in Unity abide; for sinless Brahmâ dwells in Unity, and they rest ever in Brahmâ.—19.

With inner vision fixed, undeluded, knowing the Eternal, and in Brahmâ established, be not over-glad attaining joy, nor over-sad encountering grief.—20.

He whose self is unattached to outward things, findeth joy within; devoted to the Eternal One by inner union, he tasteth endless bliss.—21.

But pleasures are mingled with pain when born of contact with external things; these joys begin and end, O Son, the wise man delighteth not therein.—22.

Blest is he, who, even here on earth, bears body's yoke and masters impulse born of lust and wrath—he is called "devoted" (*Yukta*).—23.

YUKTA or yoked, united or devoted wholly to his ideal.

He whose joy is within, whose serenity is within, whose light is within, he is a Mystic (*Yogi*), merged in the Eternal One (*Brahmâ*) and reacheth His supremest Bliss (*Nirvâna*).—24.

The wise and holy men, with sins destroyed, with doubts dispelled, victors over self, intent upon the weal of all the living—these win the Eternal's Highest Bliss (*Nirvâna*).—25.

Verily, they are nigh to such Bliss, who knowing Self, triumph over anger and desire, gaining lordship in nature and in thought.—26.

Excluding all objects of the sense, in concentration fixed, with breathing tranquillized and sure.—27.

The Sage, with senses, mind, and insight (*Buddhi*) all directed to his goal, from hindrances set free, he, verily, to deliverance hath come.—28.

Yea, for he knoweth ME, Whose delights are in sacred works, Whose Presence austerity invokes—the Mighty Lord of all the worlds, the Lover of all that lives—and in ME he findeth Peace.—29.

(To be continued).

APHORISMS OF CARDINAL BONA*

¶ This is true philosophy, to separate soul and body by wisdom before they come to be parted by necessity.

No man is master of himself so long as he is a slave to anything else.

It is more glorious to take no notice at all of an injury than to pardon it.

The love of Eternity is the death of envy.

Sloth is the vice of a languishing soul.

To hear much and speak little is a divine virtue.

The best way to keep out wicked thoughts is to be always employed upon good ones.

It is a great advance, the very first step that leads to virtue and perfection.

He that loves anything with his whole heart makes that his God.

Whether I be sick or well, rich or poor, here or elsewhere, be it as it pleases God, His will be done.

True joy is a serious matter.

A good man may be reputed unhappy, but he can never be so.

No man can desire what he despises.

It is a senseless thing to fear what we cannot shun.

No man is injured but by himself.

I am resolved that nothing shall make me angry this day, whatever it be.

He that knows everything but himself knows in effect as much as comes to nothing.

'Tis much better to be good than to be so esteemed.

God leads the willing, and draws the unwilling.

He that takes God for his guide shall be sure never to miss the way.

He that believes aright will practise what he believes.

Good counsel, without execution, is of no effect.

He that would live comfortably must die daily.

Perseverance is the crown and perfection of all virtues. The reward is promised to beginners, but is delivered to those who persevere.

The greatest minds are ever the most serene and quiet.

* Cardinal Bona was an Italian mystic philosopher of the seventeenth century who wrote many devotional books. One of the best known is *Manuductio ad Coelum*, from which these Aphorisms are collected.

* * *

“Listen, my heart, to the whispers of the world with which it makes love to you.”—*Tagore*.

THE FIRST ALCIBIADES OF PLATO

A DIALOGUE CONCERNING THE NATURE OF MAN

ONE of the most important principles of all the dialogues of Plato is the knowledge of ourselves; for, with this firmly established as an hypothesis, we shall be able accurately to learn the nature of the Good which is adapted to us, and the evil which opposes this Good.

For where is it proper to begin, except from the purification and perfection of ourselves, and whence does the Delphic Deity exhort us to begin? Even as those who enter the Eleusinian Grove are ordered, by an inscription, not to enter the adytum of the Temple if they are uninitiated in the Mysteries, so the inscription "Know Thyself," on the Delphic Temple manifests the mode of returning to a Divine Nature and the most useful path to purification.

Hence, then, let us also begin conformably to the mandate of the God and let us investigate in which of his dialogues Plato especially makes the speculation of our essence his principal design. Can we then adduce any other writing of Plato except the *First Alcibiades* and the conference of Socrates which is delivered in this dialogue? Where else shall we say our essence is so unfolded and where are man and the nature of man so investigated? To which we may add, that it is Socrates who engages in this first conversation with Alcibiades and that it is he who says that the beginning of perfection is suspended from the contemplation of ourselves. For we are ignorant of ourselves, in consequence of being involved in the oblivion produced by the realms of generation and agitated by the tumult of the irrational forms of life.

This dialogue, therefore, is the beginning of all philosophy, in the same manner as the knowledge of ourselves is the beginning of our perfection. Hence many logical and ethical theorems are scattered in it, together with such as contribute to the entire realization of felicity. It likewise contains information with respect to many things which contribute to physiology and to those doctrines which lead us to the truth concerning Divine Natures Themselves.

Hence, too, the venerable Iamblichus assigns this dialogue to the first rank among the ten dialogues in which he affirms that the basic teachings of Plato are contained.

Of the truths expressed in it, some precede and others follow the principal design, which is the knowledge of ourselves.

Those which precede unfold the hypothesis of twofold ignorance (i.e., the ignorance that is ignorant of its ignorance) and the exhortation to the quest of knowledge; while those which follow are the demonstration of virtue and felicity, and the rejection of that which pertains to the unawakened multitude. But the most perfect and leading design of the whole discussion between Socrates and Alcibiades, is the speculation of our own essence; therefore, he will not err who establishes the care and knowledge of ourselves as the end of this dialogue.

—(*From Proclus' Commentary; extracted and adapted from Thomas Taylor's translation.*)

“Alcibiades, who is described as a very young man, is about to enter on public life, having an inordinate opinion of himself, and an extravagant ambition. Socrates, ‘who knows what is in man,’ astonishes him by a revelation of his designs. But has he the knowledge which is necessary for carrying them out? He is going to persuade the Athenians—about what? Not about any particular art, but about politics—when to fight, and when to make peace. Now, men should fight and make peace on just grounds, and therefore the question of justice and injustice must enter into peace and war; and he who advises the Athenians must know the difference between them. Does Alcibiades know? If he does, he must either have been taught by some master, or he must have discovered the nature of them himself. If he has had a master, Socrates would like to be informed who he is, that he may go and learn of him also. Alcibiades admits that he has never learned. Then has he enquired for himself? He may have, if he was ever aware of a time when he was ignorant. But he was never ignorant; for when he played with other boys at dice, he charged them with cheating, and this implied a knowledge of just and unjust.

He learned of the multitude, that is his own explanation. And why should he not learn of them the nature of justice, as he has learned the Greek language of them? To this Socrates answers, that they can teach Greek, but they cannot teach justice; for they are agreed about the one, but they are not agreed about the other: and therefore Alcibiades, who has

admitted that if he knows he must either have learned from a master or have discovered for himself the nature of justice, is convicted out of his own mouth.

Alcibiades rejoins, that the Athenians debate not about what is just and unjust, but about what is expedient and inexpedient; these, he affirms to be different and opposed. Socrates, by a series of questions, compels him to admit that the just and the expedient coincide. Alcibiades is thus reduced to the humiliating conclusion that he knows nothing of politics, even if, as he says, they are concerned with the expedient."—(*From Jowett's Introduction to his Alcibiades.*)

Then there is a further discussion in the course of which Alcibiades again contradicts himself and at last is made to confess his twofold ignorance.

The new translation which here follows is the continuation of the dialogue from this point and onwards to its completion.

THE DIALOGUE.

Socrates. Does it happen then to be an easy thing to know oneself, and was it some trifler who inscribed those words on the temple at Pytho; or is self knowledge a difficult thing and not for all?

Alcibiades. To me, Socrates, it has often seemed a thing that anyone might attain, and often, too, very difficult.

Soc. But whether it is easy or not, Alcibiades, the state of the case so far as we are concerned is this. If we knew ourselves we might know how to take care of ourselves, but never otherwise. *Alc.* True.

Soc. Come, then, in what manner might the Self of Selves be discovered; for thus we could perhaps discover what we ourselves are, but so long as we are ignorant of It, that will be impossible. *Alc.* You speak truly.

Soc. Listen then, for the love of Zeus. With whom are you now conversing? Is it not with me? *Alc.* It is.

Soc. And am I not conversing with you? *Alc.* You are.

Soc. It is Socrates, then, who is discoursing? *Alc.* Most certainly.

Soc. And Alcibiades who is listening? *Alc.* It is.

Soc. And is not Socrates discoursing by means of speech? *Alc.* How else?

Soc. And would you not call discoursing and using speech the same thing? *Alc.* Certainly.

Soc. But the user and the thing used are different?

Alc. What do you mean?

Soc. As a shoemaker, for instance, cuts with a knife and a chisel and with other tools. *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. And so the cutter and user of the tools is not the same as the tools with which he cuts? *Alc.* How could he be?

Soc. Likewise, therefore, the instruments which a harp-player uses might be distinguished from the player himself? *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. This, then, was the question which I asked you just now. Does the user always seem to be different from that which he uses? *Alc.* He does.

Soc. What, therefore, shall we say of the shoemaker? Does he cut with his tools only or with his hands also?

Alc. With his hands too.

Soc. Then he uses these also? *Alc.* He does.

Soc. And does he also use his eyes in cutting leather?

Alc. He does.

Soc. We agree that the user is different from that which he uses? *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. Then the shoemaker and the harp-player are different from the hands and eyes by which they work?

Alc. It seems so.

Soc. And does not a man use his whole body?

Alc. Certainly.

Soc. And that which uses is different from that which it uses? *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. Then the man and his body are different things?

Alc. It seems likely.

Soc. What, therefore, is the man? *Alc.* I am unable to say.

Soc. Not at all, for you can say he is that which uses his body. *Alc.* True.

Soc. Does anything but the soul use the body?

Alc. Nothing.

Soc. And does she not rule it? *Alc.* She does.

Soc. Further, I think no one will differ from me in this.

Alc. In what?

Soc. The statement that the man is one of three things.

Alc. What things?

Soc. Soul, body, or both of these compounded into one whole. *Alc.* What then?

Soc. But we agreed that that which rules the body is the man? *Alc.* We did.

Soc. Does the body then rule itself? *Alc.* By no means.

Soc. For we said that it was ruled? *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. The body, then, cannot be that which we are seeking? *Alc.* It would not seem so.

Soc. But does the compound of the two rule the body, and is this man? *Alc.* Very likely.

Soc. Least likely of all; for if one of the principles is subject there is no means whatsoever whereby they may both rule jointly. *Alc.* True.

Soc. But since the man is neither the body nor the combination of the two, it remains, I think, either that the self is nothing at all, or, if it be anything, it must be concluded that the man is no other thing than soul. *Alc.* Very much so indeed.

Soc. Must it then be proved to you still more clearly that the soul is the man? *Alc.* No, by Zeus, it seems to me to have been proved sufficiently.

Soc. If reasonably well, though not accurately proved, it is enough for us; for we shall know more accurately when we discover that which we just now passed by, for fear that its investigation might be too much for us. *Alc.* What was that?

Soc. That which was said just now in some such manner as this; that first of all the Self of Selves would have to be investigated, but now instead of that we have investigated the nature of the individual self. And perhaps that will be enough, for we could not say that anything was more truly ourselves than the soul. *Alc.* Certainly not.

Soc. Then may we not fairly conclude that you and I are conversing with one another by means of words, soul to soul? *Alc.* We may.

Soc. Then it was this that we meant when we said a little while ago that Socrates is discoursing with Alcibiades by means of speech, addressing his discourse not, it seems, to your outward person, but to the real Alcibiades. And that is the soul. *Alc.* It seems so to me.

Soc. Then he who enjoins "Know Thyself," bids us become acquainted with the soul. *Alc.* Apparently so.

Soc. Then he who has some knowledge of his bodily nature has gained a knowledge of that which is his, but not of himself? *Alc.* Just so.

Soc. Of the physicians, then, not one knows himself in so far as he is a physician, nor of the trainers in so far as he is a trainer? *Alc.* Apparently not.

Soc. Then the husbandmen and the other craftsmen are very far from knowing themselves; for they, it seems, do not even know that which is theirs, but things still further removed from it, according to the trades which they follow. For they only know that which is the body's, and by which it is served. *Alc.* True.

Soc. If, then, wisdom is the knowledge of oneself, none of these is wise owing to his craft. *Alc.* I think not.

Soc. And for this reason such crafts seem to be vulgar, and not such as a good man would learn. *Alc.* Very true.

Soc. Then, as we have been saying, he who takes care of his body, takes care of that which is his, but not of himself? *Alc.* It seems likely.

Soc. But he who takes care of his money takes care neither of himself nor of what is his, but of things still further removed from what is his? *Alc.* It seems so to me.

Soc. Then the business man is not minding his own business? *Alc.* You are right.

Soc. And so if anyone has fallen in love with the body of Alcibiades, it was not Alcibiades that he loved but one of Alcibiades' possessions. *Alc.* True.

Soc. But he who loves you loves your soul? *Alc.* It seems to follow from the discussion.

Soc. The lover of your body goes away when its bloom fades? *Alc.* So it seems.

Soc. But the lover of the soul will not go away while that soul goes on to greater perfection? *Alc.* Probably he will not.

Soc. And so I am the lover who goes not away, but remains at your side when your beauty is fading and the others have gone. *Alc.* In that you do well, Socrates. Never go away.

Soc. Then try to be at your best. *Alc.* I will make every effort.

Soc. For the state of your case is this: Alcibiades, the son of Cleinias, it seems, neither had nor has any lover except one only, and this beloved one is Socrates the son of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete? *Alc.* True.

Soc. And did you not say that if I had not spoken to you first, you were on the point of coming up to me to inquire why I alone had not deserted you? *Alc.* Yes, for it was so.

Soc. This, then, was the reason—that I alone loved you, but the others that which is yours. That which is yours is losing its freshness, but you are beginning to bloom. And now, if you are not spoiled by the Athenian people and made less fair, I never will desert you. For this is what I fear most, that you should become a lover of the people and be lost to us; since many a noble Athenian has been ruined so. Fair of face is “the people of great-hearted Erectheus,” but you should see it naked. Be cautious, therefore, as I bid you. *Alc.* How cautious?

Soc. Train yourself, my dear sir, and engage in politics when you have learnt what is necessary, not before; so that you may be prepared with an antidote and come to no harm. *Alc.* That is good advice, Socrates; but try to explain the manner in which we should take care of ourselves.

Soc. Then we have made this much of an advance—what we are has been reasonably well agreed upon: before that point was settled we were afraid that we might be unconsciously taking care not of ourselves but of something else. *Alc.* Quite true.

Soc. And next we agreed that we must take care of the soul and look to it? *Alc.* Clearly.

Soc. But that the care of bodies and wealth should be consigned to others? *Alc.* Why not?

Soc. In what way, therefore, can we know the soul most clearly? For knowing this, it seems, we shall know ourselves also. Heavens, can it be that we do not understand the excellent meaning of the Delphic inscription we mentioned just now? *Alc.* What have you in your thoughts, Socrates?

Soc. I will tell you what I suspect to be the meaning and counsel which this inscription has for us. For I venture to think that an illustration of it is to be found, not everywhere, but only in the sight. *Alc.* What do you mean?

Soc. Consider. If any one were to say to the eye, as though he were giving counsel to a man, "See Thyself," what should we suppose him to recommend by this? Would it not be that the eye should look at that, by looking at which it would see itself? *Alc.* Clearly.

Soc. Let us consider then what that object is, in looking at which we see ourselves and it at the same time. *Alc.* Clearly, Socrates, in looking at mirrors and the like.

Soc. You are right. And is there not something of this kind in the eye by which we see? *Alc.* Certainly.

Soc. Then have you noticed that the face of anyone who looks in the eye of another is visible, as in a mirror, in the eyes of the person opposite him; and so we call this the pupil, because in it is an image of the beholder? *Alc.* Quite true.

Soc. And so an eye beholding an eye, and looking at its most perfect part and that by which it sees, would thus see itself? *Alc.* Apparently.

Soc. But if it looks at any other part of the man or at any other object, except that which itself resembles, it will not see itself? *Alc.* True.

Soc. Then if the eye is to see itself it must look at an eye and at that part of the eye in which the virtue of the eye resides; and this is, I suppose, sight? *Alc.* Just so.

Soc. And so, my dear Alcibiades, the soul too, if she is to know herself, must look at soul, and especially at that region of soul in which wisdom, the virtue of the soul resides, and at whatever else is like this? *Alc.* I agree, Socrates.

Soc. And can we say that any region of the soul is more divine than that which is the seat of knowledge and understanding? *Alc.* We cannot.

Soc. This region of the soul then is most like to God, and one who looked at this and came to know all that is divine, God and all wisdom, would thus gain most knowledge of himself? *Alc.* It seems so.

Soc. Shall we not say then that just as mirrors are clearer, purer, and brighter than the mirror in the eye, so God is purer and brighter than the best that is in our soul? *Alc.* It seems likely, Socrates.

Soc. Looking at God, therefore, we should use His most beautiful mirror and among human affairs we should

look at the virtue of the soul, and thus we may best see and know ourselves? *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. And we agreed that to know oneself is wisdom?

Alc. Certainly.

Soc. And so, if we do not know ourselves and are not wise, is it possible for us to know our own good and evil?

Alc. How could it be possible, Socrates?

Soc. For perhaps it appears impossible to you, not knowing Alcibiades, to know that which is his, and that it is his? *Alc.* It does certainly, by Zeus.

Soc. Nor can we know that which is ours, and that it is ours, unless we know ourselves? *Alc.* How could we?

Soc. And if we cannot know that which is ours, nor can we know that which belongs to that which is ours? *Alc.* It seems that we cannot.

Soc. Then we were not altogether right in agreeing just now that there are some who do not know themselves, but that which is theirs, but others who know that which belongs to that which is theirs. For the perception of all these things seems to be the province of one individual and of one art—himself, that which is his, and that which belongs to that which is his? *Alc.* It seems likely.

Soc. But he who is ignorant of what is his, would, I suppose, likewise be ignorant of that which belongs to others. *Alc.* Certainly.

Soc. And if he is ignorant of that which belongs to others, he will be ignorant of the affairs of cities? *Alc.* Inevitably.

Soc. Then such a man could not be a politician? *Alc.* Certainly not.

Soc. Nor the manager of a household? *Alc.* Certainly not.

Soc. He will not know what he is doing? *Alc.* He will not.

Soc. And will not he who does not know what he is doing, make mistakes? *Alc.* Assuredly.

Soc. And if he makes great mistakes will he not fare badly both in his private and public capacity? *Alc.* Indeed he will.

Soc. And faring badly, will he not be miserable?

Alc. Extremely miserable.

Soc. And what of those with whom he is dealing?

Alc. They will be miserable, too.

Soc. Then it is impossible for anyone to be happy, if he be not wise and good? *Alc.* It is impossible.

Soc. The bad, then, are miserable? *Alc.* Most miserable.

Soc. And so not he who has wealth, but he who has wisdom, is delivered from misery? *Alc.* It appears so.

Soc. Cities then, Alcibiades, if they are to be happy, do not need walls, or triremes, or docks, or numbers, or size, without virtue? *Alc.* Indeed they do not.

Soc. And if you are to manage the affairs of the city rightly and well, you must impart virtue to the citizens?

Alc. Unquestionably.

Soc. But can a man impart that which he has not?

Alc. How could he?

Soc. You yourself, then, should first acquire virtue, and so should any other who means to govern and manage not only himself and his own private affairs, but the state and the affairs of the state. *Alc.* True.

Soc. You must not therefore procure for yourself or the state authority and power to do what you wish, but justice and wisdom. *Alc.* So it seems.

Soc. For both you and the city, if you act justly and wisely, will act in accordance with the will of God.

Alc. That may be supposed.

Soc. And as we said before, you will act thus by looking at that which is divine and splendid. *Alc.* So it appears.

Soc. And moreover by looking thither you will perceive and know yourselves and your own good. *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. And therefore you will act rightly and well? *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. And moreover if you act thus I will pledge myself that you will be happy. *Alc.* Your pledge is a safe one.

Soc. But if you act unjustly, and look at that which is godless and dark, you will, as is probable, do deeds of a like nature, being ignorant of your true selves. *Alc.* Very likely.

Soc. For if, my dear Alcibiades, a man has power to do as he likes, but lacks mind, what is likely to be the result either to him as an individual or to the state? For instance, when a sick man has the power to do as he wishes and has not the mind of a physician—but is moreover in the position of a tyrant, so that no one dares to reprove him—what will happen? Will it not be most probably the destruction of his body? *Alc.* True.

Soc. Or again in the case of a ship, if a man had power to do what he thought proper, but had no intelligence or skill in navigation, do you perceive what would happen to him and his fellow-sailors? *Alc.* I do: they would all be lost.

Soc. Is it otherwise then in a state or in any offices of command and authority? When they lack virtue does it not follow that they fare badly? *Alc.* Inevitably.

Soc. Then it is not absolute power, my dear Alcibiades, that you must procure for yourself or for the state, if you are to be happy, but virtue. *Alc.* True.

Soc. And, before virtue is acquired, to be governed by his superior is better than to govern, not only for a child, but for a man. *Alc.* Evidently.

Soc. And that which is better is also more beautiful? *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. And that which is more beautiful is more fitting? *Alc.* Certainly.

Soc. Then it is fitting for the bad man to be a slave, because better? *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. Then wickedness is for slaves? *Alc.* It seems so.

Soc. But virtue for the free? *Alc.* Yes.

Soc. And, my friend, is not that which is fit for slaves to be avoided? *Alc.* Most certainly, Socrates.

Soc. Do you perceive now how it is with you? As befits a freeman or not? *Alc.* I think I perceive very clearly indeed.

Soc. And do you know how to escape from your present condition—not to mention it before a gentleman? *Alc.* I do.

Soc. How? *Alc.* If you wish it, Socrates.

Soc. That is not well said, Alcibiades. *Alc.* What ought I to say then?

Soc. If God wills. *Alc.* I say it then. And further I say that our characters seem likely to be reversed. For from this day forward I shall not fail to follow you as you have followed me.

Soc. My noble sir, my love will be like the stork; for having hatched out a winged love in you, it will be cherished by it in turn. *Alc.* But it is so, and henceforth I shall begin to cultivate justice.

Soc. And I hope that you will succeed; but I have fears, not because I distrust your character, but I see the strength of the state, which may be too much for both of us.

MYSTIC VERSE

As the sun-flower ever turning
To the mighty sun,
With the faithfulness of fealty
Following only one—

So make me, Lord, to Thee.

—*Tavler.*

* * *

Thou hast granted my heart's desire—
Most blest of the blessed is he
Who findeth no rest and no sweetness
Till he rests, O Lord, in Thee.

—*Suso.*

* * *

In Him we live, in Him we move; seek not thy God afar:
He is not prisoned in a height above sun, moon, and star.
But thou through strange dark lands hast strayed, and
wandered far from Him;
And therefore He, O Soul, to thee, is distant and is dim.

—Tersteegen.

* * *

No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
That made him; it was blessedness and love.

—Wordsworth.

* * *

O Thou that in our bosom's shrine
Dost dwell—unknown because divine.

I will not frame one thought of what
Thou mayest either be or not;
I will not prate of *thus* or so,
Nor be profane with *yes* or *no*;
Enough that in our soul and heart
Thou, whatso'er Thou mayest be, art.

—Clough.

If Thou wouldst hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
 Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
 There, brooding by the central altar, thou
 Mayst haply learn the Nameless hath a voice
 By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
 As if thou knowest, tho' thou canst not know.

And when thou sendest thy free soul thro' heaven,
 Nor understandest bound or boundlessness,
 Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names,
 And if the Nameless should withdraw from all
 Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
 Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

—Tennyson.

* * *

O world invisible, we view Thee,
 O world intangible, we touch Thee,
 O world unknowable, we know Thee,
 Inapprehensible, we clutch Thee.

—Francis Thompson.

* * *

If thou wouldst enter on the Way of Contemplation,
 Thou must take the path that leadeth thereto.
 The same is a conscience pure and undefiled—
 A simple and well-regulated life,
 A modest demeaning of thyself,
 And temperance in outward things.
 Thou must restrain the ungoverned desires of Nature,
 Supplying her wants with wisdom and discretion,
 Ministering, in the world without, to all who need in love
 and mercy;
 And, in the world within, emptying thyself of every vain
 imagining;
 Gazing inward with an eye uplifted and open to the Eternal
 Truth;
 Inwardly abiding in simplicity, and stillness, and in utter
 peace.

So shalt thou bring with thee
 A burning earnestness of Love,
 A fiery Flame of devotion,

MYSTIC VERSE—*Continued.*

Leaping and ascending with the very goodness of God Himself;
A loving longing of the soul to be with God in His Eternity;
A turning from all things of self into the freedom of the
Will of God,
With all the forces of the soul gathered into the unity of
the Spirit;

Thanking and glorifying God,
And loving and serving Him,
In everlasting reverence.
—*Ruysbroeck.*

JEWELS

“ Many are deeply learned in variety of Arts and Sciences, and all the while continue as profoundly ignorant of themselves. They are inquisitive about the affairs of other men, and perfectly void of thought or care of their own. Nay, even in their most useful and necessary studies, where God is the subject of enquiry, they think to find Him in the things without them, and overlook the evidence of Him within their own breasts. None of which, though within them, is yet so intimate and close to them, as God. I desire then that I may proceed in a quite contrary method, and from *external*, retire to *internal* evidences; from objects *within*, rise to those *above* me; that by these I may at last understand whence I come, and whither I am bound; what I am, why I am, and from whom I am; that so this knowledge of my self may lead me up to the knowledge of God. For the more perfect understanding I have of my own condition, the nearer I shall approach, and advance proportionately towards the right understanding of the Divine Nature and Perfections.”—*St. Bernard.*

* * *

"All things make one music with the Truth."—*Aristotle.*

* * *

“There is only one Path, that of Virtue; all others are pathless.”—“*Avesta.*”

* * *

“ Let us conquer utterly. Our prize is no mere wealth or palm. Moreover, the Gods are all on our side: to those who are fain to ascend They reach out Their hands. From Them come our great and potent resolutions.”—*Seneca*.

* * *

“The day of death, which thou fearest as thy last, is really that of thy eternal birthday.”—*ibid.*

SEED THOUGHTS

“To some, the practice of mental prayer, or meditation, continues, almost to the end, irksome and trying, full of distraction and imperfection. This may easily arise from natural deficiencies of the mind, or from habitual negligence. But to a willing and persevering mind these difficulties will diminish, and the power of concentrating the thoughts and affections upon a given subject will increase and strengthen. Thus far anyone may aspire with every chance of success. Then comes a higher stage: when this power of fixing the mind is not only easy but most pleasing: when, without formal guidance, the soul rests, like the bird poised upon its wings, motionless above the earth, plunged, as it were, in the calm atmosphere which surrounds and sustains it on every side. This is the state of contemplation, when the placid action of a deep inward thoughtfulness, undisturbed by other objects, is intent on gazing upon images and scenes fixed or passing as on a mirror before it, without exertion or fatigue, almost without note of time. But far above the earthly exercise of contemplation is one which belongs to a much higher and purer sphere. The soul, thoroughly purified of all other affections, reaches a sublime and supernatural power of setting all its faculties in the contemplation of the Supreme Being with such clearness and intensity, that its very existence seems lost in Him.”—*Cardinal Wiseman*.

* * *

“Mysticism is a spiritual philosophy which demands the concurrent activity of thought, will, and feeling. It assumes from the outset that these three elements of our personality, which in real life are never sundered from each other, point towards the same goal, and if rightly used will conduct us thither. Further, it holds that only by the consecration of these three faculties in the service of the same quest can a man become effectively what he is potentially, a partaker of the Divine nature and a denizen of the spiritual world. There is no special organ for the reception of Divine or spiritual truth, which is simply the knowledge of the world as it really is. Some are better endowed with spiritual gifts than others, and are called to ascend greater heights; but the power which leads us up the pathway to reality and blessedness is, as Plotinus says, one which all possess though few use it.”—*Dean Inge*.

* * *

“There are so many varieties and degrees of prayer, from crude appeals to the unseen powers for the gratification of ambition or appetite, to the rapture of the saint who cries: ‘God, of Thy Goodness, give me Thyself, for only in Thee have I all,’ that at first sight it is difficult to find much in common between them or to arrive at any satisfactory definition of prayer. Some prayers are not even moral, some of the highest do not contain

any petition at all, yet all are recognised as expressions of a common human instinct. A closer study, however, shows that prayer, like everything else in the universe, is subject to the law of evolution. Each type is more especially suited to a particular stage of development, and depends for its success upon its reasonable correspondence, not only with the actual conditions, physical, emotional, or mental, of the outer world, but with the habitual interests and attitude of mind of the petitioner, while prayers which are useful at one stage may be positively harmful at another, and some kinds of prayer cannot be employed at all by any except highly developed people."—*W. Wybergh.*

* * *

"It is useless to try to help people by placing before them an ideal which is not yet beautiful to them, or which is entirely beyond their reach. It may be *our* ideal, but if it is not theirs, it not only will not help them, but it may actually hinder. It is as if one, standing far up on a ladder, and wishing to guide another on the lower steps, were to tell him to place his foot on the step on which he himself was standing. The result would only be that he would fall backward, and have to begin his climb anew. So he will rather explain to him how to raise his foot to the step immediately above him. That is why in ancient times teaching used to be given to individuals or to small groups of pupils, but rarely to large crowds; it is the only way in which teaching, whether intellectual or spiritual, can be really helpful and effective."—*L. Edgar.*

* * *

"Of all the inventions of casuistry, with which man for ages has in various ways manacled himself, and stayed his own advance, there is none equally potent with the supposition that nothing more is possible. Once well impress on the mind that it has already all, that advance is impossible because there is nothing further, and it is chained like a horse to an iron pin in the ground. It is the most deadly—the most fatal poison of the mind. . . . From standing face to face so long with the real earth, the real sun, and the real sea, I am firmly convinced that there is an immense range of thought quite unknown to us yet. . . . Never, never rest contented with any circle of ideas, but always be certain that a wider one is still possible. . . . Light conceals more than it reveals."—*Richard Jefferies.*

* * *

"Every day that is born into this world comes like a burst of music and rings itself all the day through; and thou shalt make it a dance, a dirge, or a life march, as thou wilt."—*Carlyle.*

* * *

"The very walls of old sanctuaries where the blessed and the pure have lived are impregnated with their thought. This may last for centuries and can be felt by those rare souls who are receptive to such influences."—*Narada Sutra.*

MYSTICS AT PRAYER

"We seek Thy face; turn Thy face unto us, and show us Thy glory. Then shall our longing be satisfied, and our peace shall be perfect."—*St. Augustine.*

* * *

"Grant that no word may fall from me against my will unfit for the present need."—*Pericles.*

* * *

"O Eternal Light, shine into our hearts. O Eternal Goodness, deliver us from evil. O Eternal Power, be Thou our support. Eternal Wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance. Eternal Pity, have mercy upon us."—*Archbishop Alcuin.*

* * *

"O God, acknowledge what is Thine in us, and take away from us all that is not Thine, for Thy honour and glory."—*St. Bernardine.*

* * *

"In Thee would we lose ourselves utterly; do in us what Thou wilt."—*Jacob Boehme.*

* * *

"We are forced, O Father, to seek Thee daily, and Thou offerest Thyself daily to be found; whensoever we seek Thee we find Thee, in the house, in the fields, in the temple, and in the highway."—*John Norden (16th cent.)*

* * *

"O Lord, renew our souls and draw our hearts unto Thyself, that our work may not be to us a burden but a delight, and give us such a mighty love to Thee as may sweeten all our obedience. Oh! let us not serve Thee with the spirit of bondage as slaves, but with the cheerfulness and gladness of children, delighting ourselves in Thee and rejoicing in Thy work."—*Benjamin Jenks (17th cent.)*

* * *

"O God, in Thee alone can our wearied souls have full satisfaction and rest, and in Thy love is the highest joy. Lord, if we have Thee, we have enough."—*Melchior Ritter (17th cent.)*

* * *

"O Admirable Wisdom, that circlest all eternity, receivest into Thyself all immensity, and drawest to Thyself all infinity; from the inexhaustible fountain of Thy light, shed some ray into my soul that I may more and more love whatever tends to Thy glory and honour."—*Blaise Palma (17th cent.)*

* * *

"O Thou Spirit of Life, breathe upon us Thy graces in us, take us by the hand and lift us from earth."—*Richard Baxter (17th cent.)*

"Let Thy love so warm our souls, O Lord, that we may gladly surrender ourselves with all we are and have unto Thee. Let Thy love fall as fire from heaven upon the altar of our hearts, and teach us to guard it heedfully by continual devotion and quietness of mind."—*Gerhard Tersteegen* (18th cent.).

* * *

"Pour upon us Thy Spirit of meekness and love. Annihilate selfhood in us. Be Thou all our life."—*William Blake* (18th cent.).

* * *

"Exalt us with Thee, O Lord, to know the mystery of life, that we may use the earthly as the appointed expression and type of the heavenly, and by using to Thy glory the natural body may befit it to be exalted to the use of the spiritual body."—*Charles Kingsley* (19th cent.).

JEWELS

"Thou art never the nearer Him till thou hast found Him. He is in thee, though He be lost from thee; but thou art not in Him till thou hast found Him."—*Walter Hilton*.

* * *

"If we are liberated from the changes, and the giddiness, and the satieties, and the base extortions of the world, we dwell with permanent, imperishable beings, and shine, like lesser luminaries, encircling in choral dance the one Grand Light."—*St. Gregory of Nazianzen*.

* * *

"That which is not good for all, or which does not always continue so, or which is not so in itself, is not, properly speaking, of the nature of goodness."—*St. Chrysostom*.

* * *

"Advance in good, advance in right faith, advance in good conduct; sing, and walk on."—*St. Augustine*.

* * *

"Do not pray that what you wish may come to pass, but rather that the will of God may be done in you."—*Abbot Nilus*.

* * *

"For my part, and I have been long at it, I desire no other gift of prayer but that which ends in every day making me a better and better woman."—*St. Teresa*.

* * *

"Let us choose God, and let God choose the rest for us."—*Bishop Jeremy Taylor*.

THE CELTIC FESTIVALS

II.—MAY EVE or BELTANE

May 1st is usually given as the date of this festival, but since the Celts measured their day from sunset to sunset the festival really began on the evening of April 29th. Beltane and Samain, the May and November festivals, were the major divisions of the year, as is shown by the fact that the survivals of these two are much more common and easily recognised than those of the other two.

Among these survivals are all the observances connected with the May-pole and the May Queen. These are gradually dying out, but may still be found in many country places, especially in those where Puritan influence was not very strong, for the Puritans cut to pieces every May-pole they could find—probably with some justification as the festival had become an excuse for various abuses. At one time London was famous for its May-poles, and the Church of St. Andrew Undershaft probably derived its name from the fact that the May-pole which was set up near it overtopped the church steeple. On this day maidens bathed their faces in dew and prayed for beauty.

Among other May-day customs is that which is observed at Magdalen College, Oxford, where the choir sing a Latin hymn on the top of the tower at sunrise on May Morning.

Among May Day festivities was the crowning with flowers of the May Queen or May Lady, a girl selected for her beauty to act as queen or directress of the games on May Day. Homage was offered to her. The May Lord was a youth chosen to preside over the sports and wrestling.

The May garland was formed of two transverse willow hoops decorated with flowers and greenery, and suspended from a stick or pole. In some places two balls, one of gold and one of silver, were hung on it.

The customs connected with flowers appear to have come down to us through the Roman Floralia, celebrated about May 1st, in honour of the Goddess Flora. There are no records of any floral ceremonies in connection with the Druidic Beltane, though dancing apparently was a part of the festival;

yet it is probable that both the Druidic and the Roman feasts had a common origin in that far-back period before the Celts reached Britain.

Among the mythical events recorded in connection with this feast are the overcoming of the Firbolg, or Fomorian, by the Tuatha de Danann in Ireland, and the fight which took place every 1st of May between Gwythyr the son of Greidawl and Gwyn ap Nudd for the maiden Creiddylad, the Welsh Persephone.

The name Beltane or Bealteine means “(the day of the fire of Bel.” Bel, Baal, or Belenus was the Celtic Apollo, an aspect of the Sovereign Sun. The British Druids held their initiation ceremonies at this feast, while in Ireland all fires were put out and only lighted again from the sacred fire kindled by the Arch Druid. The custom, which was observed until recently in remote places, of leaping thrice through the fire at Beltane, or driving cattle between two fires in order to ward off disease, may be a relic of some rite of purification.

At this season the Welsh Druids commemorated the escape of Dwyvan and Dwyvach from the deluge caused by the bursting of Llyn Llion, the Lake of Floods. They entered into an ark and were preserved, just as, in the Hebrew story, Noah and his wife were preserved. The Druidic ritual represented the drawing from a sacred lake of the “Avanc,” which may have been an ark or sanctuary, the symbol of Ked, by means of oxen (the oxen of Hu). Hu Gadarn, or Hu the Mighty, is a deified hero with many of the attributes of Bel. He it was who after the deluge first held “the strong-beamed plough.” He also formed social order and taught the people poetry and religion. Like Osiris he is a teacher and protector.

The mystical significance of some of the May customs is more easily seen when it is remembered that in most of them two principles are involved, the Above and the Below—Osiris and Isis, Heaven and Earth, Hu and Ked.

The solstice is symbolical of actualized perfection, when the below perfectly mirrors the above, and, in mystical language, the Hieros Gamos, the Sacred Marriage of Uranus and Gaia, the Principles of Heaven and Earth, takes place. If, as is possible, the Celtic festivals were originally solstitial and equinoctial, and reached their present positions in the year through the precession of the equinoxes, then we should

expect to find something of the joy of this crown of the year in the atmosphere of Beltane, which in some places was kept on St. John's Eve, or the Solstice. But as May is not yet the climax there will be something, too, of the expectation and hope of spring. And so Beltane is not the true Festival of the Sacred Marriage, but might almost be described as the Feast of the Arraying of the Bride.

Looked at from the microcosmic point of view, it celebrates the purification of the Soul from the stains of transiency, the clothing of her in the white bridal robe. The ark is a symbol of the Great World Mother—Isis, Demeter, Ceridwen, Ked—and so, too, of Her daughter, the human Soul. The Soul, by the mighty oxen of Her Lord, the Sovereign Sun, the Spirit, is drawn at last from the waters of generation and brought to her true home wherein she reigns as queen.

JEWELS

"We know that 'in this world we must have tribulation'; we ought also to know and remember that we deserve it. Yet we are always surprised and disconcerted when trial comes upon us, as if it were both undeserved and unnecessary for us. It belongs only to those who are perfect in the love of God, to receive trials with joy."—*Archbishop Fénelon*.

* * *

"Everyone who has wholly dedicated himself to God is most sweetly ignorant, and does not so much as desire to know why this or that is permitted or commanded by God. Whatever the burden may be, he takes it on willing shoulders. It is enough for him to see the burden concealed by the blue veil—that is to say, clothed with the Divine will."—*Drexelius*.

* * *

"Love heroically, and all things will be sweet and easy to thee; and the hardest combats will be but a pleasing exercise of thy love."—*Avrillon*.

* * *

"God is All-Love, endless sovereign Love unmade."—*Lady Julian of Norwich*.

* * *

"The mystics all come from the same country and speak the same language."—*Blake*.

EDITORIAL

CHALDEAN ORACLES.

The new series of Articles under this heading should prove of real interest and value to all students of the Ancient Mystery Teachings.

Embedded, as it were, in these fragmentary Oracles, are the basic principles, not only of the highest philosophy, but likewise of spiritual mysticism in its purest form.

Their full significance may not, perhaps, be evident at first, but they will amply repay those readers who give them careful and thorough consideration and reflection.

PLATONIC DIALOGUES.

It is an extraordinary fact that at the present time there is not *in print* a complete English translation of the Works of Plato, although he is universally admitted to be the greatest Philosopher known to the Occident.

Probably the most reliable Translation, from the standpoint of being the truest interpretation of Plato's teachings, is that by Thomas Taylor; but this, like all the other works of the Great English Platonist, is now most difficult to procure.

"The First Alcibiades" (part only of which is included in the new translation because

of lack of space) is one of the best of the dialogues upon which to begin a study of Plato. Firstly, because it is one of the simplest to follow; and secondly, because it concerns the nature of man. But although it is apparently so simple as to lead some modern thinkers to doubt whether it is actually the work of Plato, nevertheless its significance is profound, and the effects that would follow a general realization of its principles are far-reaching.

The Editors hope to publish translations of other dialogues from time to time.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS.

Readers may perhaps observe that the present issue of the "Shrine" is eight pages longer than usual. Although additional expense is thus involved, the Editors felt that the various items available could not well be reduced or omitted.

We trust our Subscribers will show their appreciation in a practical manner, for, at the present time, WE ARE IN URGENT NEED OF FURTHER SUPPORT, in order to continue the publication of the Quarterly, which is now nearing the completion of its sixth year of existence.